



What's Right for Kids



.....
*Improving
the School
Nutrition
Environment*



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What's Right for Kids

Improving the School Nutrition Environment

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What's Right for Kids

Improving the School Nutrition Environment

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Foreword

We know that one of the ways to help children learn is to ensure that they are properly fed. That is why we need nutrition and health programs that support a readiness to learn.

The hearts and minds of children cannot be fully engaged in learning unless their bodies are content and ready to learn. When children come to school hungry, when they are rushed through a hectic school lunch period, or when they become restless because there is “no time” for recess, their learning is compromised.

As part of my New Wisconsin Promise, DPI is working to bring nutrition and physical activity to the forefront for children’s health and academic achievement. Poor nutrition and lack of physical activity impact not only the health of youth by contributing to obesity and chronic diseases but also may affect cognitive skills, behaviors, and the ability to concentrate. Schools play an important role in providing healthy environments for learning and good health.

This booklet, funded by a Team Nutrition grant from the U.S. Department of Agriculture, is a valuable resource for schools, families, and communities who want to create healthy nutrition environments for children.

We cannot afford to leave the nutritional well-being of children to chance. We must strive to fully develop the physical, as well as the cognitive, potential of children. The health of this generation of children will reflect our priorities as educators, parents, community members, and as a society.

Elizabeth Burmaster
State Superintendent

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Community School District

Greendale School District

Hartford Union High School

James Madison School, Appleton Area School District

Johnston Elementary School, Appleton Area School District

Kewaunee School District

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Maryland Avenue School, Milwaukee Public Schools

Menominee Indian Schools

Menominee Tribal School

Milton School District

Mineral Point School District

Oconto School District

Sauk Prairie School District

Sparta Meadowview School

St. Henry School, Watertown

Superior School District

Viroqua Area Schools

For a summary of the Team Nutrition projects at each school or district, go to:
www.dpi.state.wi.us/dpi/dltcl/bbfcsp/tngrants.html.

Front Cover Photo (Teen drinking milk): Larissa Bindl, Sophomore, McFarland High School

How to Use the School Nutrition Learning Together Packet

This packet provides schools with ideas and resources to improve the school nutrition environment, whether your school is just beginning to consider school nutrition or is far along in the process.

Readers Will Learn About

1. The health trends and implications for children, the evidence linking nutrition to learning, and the role of nutrition in citizenship and service-learning.
2. The components of a healthy school nutrition environment and steps to improve the nutrition environment in schools.
3. The experiences of schools participating in the Team Nutrition Project to improve their school nutrition environments.
4. Involving families and the community in school nutrition efforts, assessing activities against established indicators of success, and identifying future goals.
5. Resources available to support these efforts.

Finding Articles by Topic

Below is a list of articles in this packet divided by topic. Look for the articles listed under each topic for information to advance your school nutrition efforts.

Forming a Team

- Steps to Improve the School Nutrition Environment
- Resources

Gaining Support

- Current Health Trends and Implications
- Ideas for Involving Families in Improving the School Nutrition Environment
- Steps to Improve the School Nutrition Environment
- Lessons Learned in Creating a Healthy School Nutrition Environment
- Resources

Setting Priorities and Developing an Action Plan

- Improve the School Nutrition Environment through Service-Learning
- Steps to Improve the School Nutrition Environment
- Resources

Putting Plans into Action

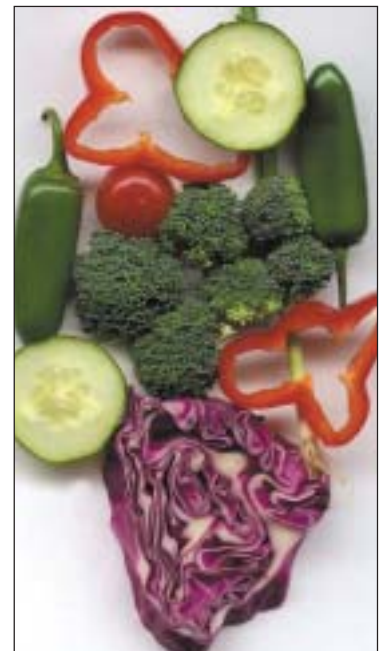
- Strategies for Improving the School Nutrition Environment
- Steps to Improve the School Nutrition Environment
- Lessons Learned in Creating a Healthy School Nutrition Environment
- Resources

Measuring Outcomes

- Steps to Improve the School Nutrition Environment
- Resources

Sustaining Efforts

- Steps to Improve the School Nutrition Environment
- Lessons Learned in Creating a Healthy School Nutrition Environment
- Resources





Current Health Trends and Implications

By: Jessie Beach, DPI VISTA Leader, and Julie Allington, MD, RD, CD, Nutrition Education Consultant

The hectic lifestyle of most families in the United States relies heavily on fast foods and leaves little time for regular physical activity. Such lifestyles have significantly affected the health of our nation's children. Many students arrive at school with empty stomachs, while others sip sodas and munch on high fat foods and sweets in place of healthier meals and snacks. Such widespread eating patterns are causing serious physical health problems in children, including obesity, diabetes, cardiovascular disease risks, and poor bone health—as well as the mental, emotional and social consequences these problems pose.

When students are in less than optimum health, their academic performance also suffers. To fight this trend, families and schools can work together to return children to a more normal, healthier way of eating. Following is a summary of some of the current health trends and challenges that face children.

Importance of Breakfast

Starting the day with a healthy breakfast can help students perform well in school. Studies have shown that children who eat breakfast had significant gains in overall standardized test scores and displayed improvement in math, reading, and vocabulary scores over those who had no breakfast. A study of third to fifth graders found a decrease in the number of days that students were late or absent from school when those students ate breakfast before school.

According to a 1998 survey done by Wisconsin Good Breakfast for Good Learning Campaign, 10 percent of elementary school students, 25 percent of middle school students, and 30 percent of high school students in Wisconsin started school without breakfast the day before the survey.

Studies have shown that when children participate in school breakfast or lunch programs, their test scores and class performance improves, while their tardiness, absenteeism, and psychosocial problems decline. Students who are well-fed enjoy longer attention spans and improved behavioral and emotional adjustment. Breakfast eaters also tend to eat less fat during the day, since they are less likely to be ravenously hungry for mid-morning snacks or lunch. Thus eating breakfast results in weight control.



Obesity Epidemic

Childhood obesity has become a national epidemic. In the seventies, five percent of children and adolescents were overweight. By 2002, 8.8 million, or 15.5 percent of children and teens were identified as overweight or obese. The increase of overweight children in the

United States ages six to 17 has more than doubled in the past 20 years and that trend is continuing, according to the National Center for Health Statistics.

The Center for Disease Control reported that 4.7 million children of that age are considered seriously overweight, based on their Body Mass Index. Several factors contribute to the high obesity rates in children, primarily overeating and inactivity.

What is Body Mass Index (BMI)?

BMI is a mathematical equation that adjusts weight to height and is used to measure underweight and overweight. To calculate

BMI for adults, go to www.cdc.gov/nccddphp/dnpa/bmi/bmi-adult.htm

Since girls and boys differ in fatness as they mature, the BMI for children is gender and age specific.

- Underweight children have a BMI below the fifth percentile.
- At-risk for overweight children have a BMI that is in the 85th to 94th percentile for their age.
- Overweight children fall within the 95th percentile or higher of the BMI for their age.

For BMI for children, go to www.cdc.gov/nccddphp/dnpa/bmi/bmi-for-age.htm

Eating Too Much — Choices in food have changed in recent years, with increases in both portion sizes and in the number of convenience and fast foods for time-starved families. In addition, advertising on television, in magazines, and in schools is often geared toward youth who have substantial buying power. Children and adolescents annually spend \$5.4 billion at fast food restaurants and \$9.6 billion at food and snack stores. With the rise in the number of two-parent working families, children home alone, especially after school, are quick to choose high-fat and high-sugar snacks or meals in order to immediately satisfy hunger pangs.

Inactivity — Children and adolescents increasingly tend to be physically inactive. Many children average four to five hours a day in front of a screen—television, videos, video games, and computers—often while snacking. The television ads they watch often tout food products, prompting children to eat even more.

Fewer than 20 percent of adults and children get regular workouts, despite the benefits of physical activity. Almost half of 12 to 20-year-olds do not engage in regular vigorous physical activity. Further, physical education and recess times have

decreased in U.S. schools. A recent study by the American Council for Fitness and Nutrition found that while teens consumed only one percent more calories between 1980 and 2000, their physical activity decreased 13 percent. A sedentary person is more likely to become obese than an active person.

Inconsistent Health Messages — Schools may send mixed messages to children about healthy eating. Some financially-strapped schools raise funds through vending and a la carte items, often replacing healthier lunches and snacks provided at school. A la carte lunch choices are available in 76 percent of high schools, 64 percent of middle schools, and 50 percent of elementary schools. Thirteen percent of schools offer name brand fast foods. Vending machines are available in 26 percent of elementary schools, 62 percent of middle schools, and 95 percent of high schools.

Students may learn about healthy eating in the classroom, but get inconsistent messages when presented with high-fat, high-sugar items in the a la carte line, in vending machines, or in the school store. Teachers may reward students with unhealthy treats for performing well in school or for leading the school fund drive. Inconsistent messages confuse students about how to maintain a normal, healthy diet.

Implications of Childhood Obesity

What are the implications of this serious problem of childhood obesity? The increase in obesity rates of children and adolescents is a major contributor to many preventable diseases, such as cardiovascular disease and diabetes. In a recent pediatric study, doctors found that over 25 percent of children ages five to ten had one or more cardiovascular disease risk factors. That number rose to almost 61 percent for overweight children of the same age; 27 percent of overweight children in that study had two or more risk factors. Type 2 Diabetes in children has risen 1000 percent in the past ten years, bringing the reported number of children with the disease to 30,000 children in the United States. Cardiovascular disease and Type 2 Diabetes, formerly found primarily in adults, are now affecting children due primarily to unhealthy eating habits and a sedentary lifestyle.

Another serious implication of an obese nation is that, while people are growing larger, the media portray beauty in excessive thinness. People, especially young women, are afraid of becoming fat and not living up to ideal standards of beauty. This fear of fat has led to size discrimination. Fat prejudice is formed by age eight and is the strongest prejudice found in children. Children mock those who appear overweight, causing them to have low self-esteem and an increase in anger, stress, and depression. Studies have found that girls who are exposed to rail-thin images of beauty in the media also can have distorted body images and

are more likely to be dissatisfied with their bodies. Attitudes toward thinness are formed as early as three years of age, and by elementary school, girls fear looking fat more than losing their parents, nuclear war, or cancer. Such attitudes can lead to eating disorders in the teen and young adult years.

Depression is high among those who are overweight, because they are stigmatized by their peers and the media as being unfit and unbeautiful. According to the Centers for

Disease Control's Youth Risk Behavior Survey (YRBS), teens trying to lose weight, or who think they are overweight, are more likely to attempt suicide. Further, obese women are 55 percent more likely to attempt suicide than average-size women. A society obsessed with size looks down upon those who cannot meet the high standards set by the media; the consequences of that attitude can be devastating.

Physical activity can be therapeutic both physically and mentally, and improve learning. Physical activity is related to a higher self-esteem and lower anxiety and stress levels than inactivity. Children engaged in daily

physical activity show superior motor fitness, improved academic performance, and a more positive attitude compared to those not engaged in regular physical activity. Additionally, when combined with appropriate caloric intake, physical activity can prevent and reduce obesity.

Risk for Osteoporosis

Students increasingly choose to drink soda instead of milk. Teens, in fact, drink twice as much carbonated soda as milk. Not only does soda contribute to obesity problems because it contains more sugar and calories than milk, but soda also lacks calcium, the mineral so important to healthy bone development. Milk and dairy products contain the high amounts of calcium needed to increase bone density and combat osteoporosis. Of children age two to eight years, 88 percent of boys and 79 percent of girls meet the Recommended Daily Allowance of calcium, but only 52 percent of boys and 19 percent of girls aged nine to 19 meet that recommendation.





CURRENT HEALTH TRENDS AND IMPLICATIONS (continued)

In the 1980s, boys drank twice as much milk as soda, and girls drank 50 percent more.

The loss of calcium in the diet, as a result of the replacement of milk with soda, is an important risk factor in bone fractures occurring in adolescents.

Such injuries contribute to absenteeism from school and can lead to osteoporosis later in life. The window of opportunity for establishing maximum bone density extends only from childhood through the teen years into young adulthood.

Risk of Low Calcium

It is reasonable to conclude that low calcium intakes may be an important risk factor for fractures in adolescents.

— A 1999 statement by the American Academy of Pediatrics Committee on Nutrition

Dysfunctional Eating

All of these trends contribute to a growing phenomenon in the United States called dysfunctional eating. A person with dysfunctional eating spends 30 – 65 percent of their time focused on food, hunger, weight, and body image. Reports indicate that between 50 and 80 percent of American girls and women age 11 and older display dysfunctional eating patterns. The number of boys and men who do not eat normally is also increasing.

Normal vs. Dysfunctional Eating — Dysfunctional eaters tend to be irregular and chaotic without normal controls of nourishment like appetite and satiety. They eat for reasons other than hunger. Dysfunctional eating can affect a person physically, mentally, emotionally and socially. A dysfunctional eater may be tired and apathetic; experience decreased energy, alertness, and concentration; or have greater mood instability, less social integration, and become more self-absorbed. In contrast, people with normal eating patterns eat when they are hungry until satisfied; eat foods they like; truly get enough to eat; use some constraint in their diet; include pleasurable foods, eat whether they are happy, sad, or bored; may have three meals a day; can over- or under-eat occasionally, trust body to make up for mistakes in eating; and are flexible in their diet.

Dysfunctional Eating Inhibits Meeting Education

Goals — Dysfunctional eating is different from an eating disorder. On the continuum from normal eating to life-threatening eating disorders, dysfunctional eating lies somewhere in between. Many dysfunctional eaters do not know what normal eating entails.

Dysfunctional eating in children can significantly impact classroom performance. Undernourished children and adolescents may be tired, apathetic, chilled, lacking in energy, and

experience a delay in puberty onset. They are also at a higher risk for developing eating disorders later in adolescence and young adulthood.

In extreme cases, dysfunctional eating can impair mental, emotional, and social wellness. Children may become less alert in the classroom and have a difficult time concentrating; they may lose interest in activities, become less ambitious, and turn inward. In addition, they may have greater mood instability and become preoccupied with food, weight, and body image. Socially, abnormal eating patterns can contribute to a decline in a child's social integration. They become withdrawn, self-absorbed, disconnected, or lonely. These children often see less value in relationships with friends, family, and their communities.

Such attitudes can make achieving the education goals difficult. A child or teenager more focused on food, hunger, weight, or body image than schoolwork can challenge efforts to help them do well in school and society. Healthy students with normal eating styles are better prepared to attend school and apply what they learn as they grow into responsible citizens.

What Can Schools Do?

Schools and families can foster a healthy attitude in children and adolescents both in word and in deed. Specifically they can help children and adolescents develop healthy eating behaviors by giving children consistent health messages, by ensuring that healthy food choices are offered at home and at school, and by encouraging an active lifestyle. The articles in this publication provide ideas for schools to promote good nutrition.

The Process of Weight Gain

1. Weight gain results when the amount of energy consumed exceeds the amount of energy expended. To maintain weight, the amount of food consumed needs to be balanced with the amount of physical activity.
2. One pound equals 3500 calories. If a person consumes 100 extra calories per day (equivalent to 8 ounces of soda), while activity levels remain the same, the person will gain over 10 pounds per year. If a person consumes two cans of soda per day, in addition to his/her energy needs (300 calories), the person will gain over 31 pounds in one year.

Note: Calories are calories. If you eat too many, no matter what the source, whether it's a cheeseburger or carrots, you will gain weight.

Nutrition and Academic Performance

What does the research say?

Research increasingly supports the critical link between health and learning. The following summary of new data clearly shows that when students receive proper nutrition, they perform better in the classroom:

- Numerous studies link participation in school breakfast programs with increased achievement as measured by standardized test scores and grades.
- Participation in school food programs has a positive effect on psychosocial outcomes, leading to lower levels of anxiety, hyperactivity, depression, and psychosocial dysfunction.
- Other factors, including absenteeism, tardiness, class participation, and suspension rates are affected positively.
- Dietary iron deficiency can lead to a shortened attention span, irritability, fatigue, and difficulty with concentration—all detracts to learning.

Breakfast and Student Achievement

Despite well-documented research linking healthy breakfast to student achievement, Wisconsin continues to rank last among the 50 states in the number of students receiving school breakfast.

Studies show that many Wisconsin students start school with no breakfast or an inadequate breakfast. Qualitative surveys on breakfast consumption completed by Wisconsin students showed that approximately 10 percent of students at the elementary level, 25 percent in middle school and 30 percent of high school students started school without breakfast. (1) Many other students come to school with an inadequate breakfast.

Studies show that omitting breakfast interferes with cognition and learning, an effect more pronounced in nutritionally at-risk children. A landmark study examined the effects of school breakfast on academic performance among 1,023 low-income third through fifth grade students. Results showed that children who participated in the study had significantly greater gains in overall standardized test scores, and showed improvements in math, reading, and vocabulary scores. In addition, rates of absence and tardiness were reduced among participants. (2)



Another study looked at the effects of a universal school breakfast program. Based on 133 students with pre and post data, those who increased participation (42 percent) had significant improvement in math grades, and lower rates of absence and tardiness. (3)

Hunger and Behavioral Problems

An estimated four million American children experience prolonged periodic food insufficiency and hunger each year, representing eight percent of the children under the age of 12 in this country.

The Community Childhood Hunger Identification Project (CCHIP) study examined the relationship between hunger and psychosocial functions among low-income, school-aged children. Analysis showed that virtually all behavioral, emotional, and academic problems were more prevalent in hungry children. Aggression and anxiety had the strongest degree of association with hunger. (4)

The three-year Universal School Breakfast Program pilot study in six Minnesota elementary schools showed a general increase in composite math and reading scores, and improved student behavior, reduced morning trips to the nurse and increased student attendance and test scores. (5)

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- (1) Wisconsin Good Breakfast for Good Learning Campaign. Unpublished surveys on breakfast consumption by Wisconsin school children. 1998.
 - (2) Meyres AF, Sampson AE, Weitzman M, Rogers BL, and Kayne H. *School Breakfast Program and School Performance*. American Journal of Diseases of Children. 1989; 143:1234-39.
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 - (4) Kleinman RE, Murphy JM, Little M, Pagano M, Wehler CA, Regal K, and Jellinek MS. *Hunger in Children in the United States: Potential Behavioral and Emotional Correlates*. Pediatrics. 1998; 101(1):E3.
 - (5) Minnesota Department of Children Families and Learning. *School Breakfast Programs Energizing the Classroom*. Minnesota Department of Children Family and Learning, 1998. Roseville, MN.



Strategies for Improving the School Nutrition Environment

A healthy school nutrition environment encompasses more than food and beverage choices available in the lunch line. It also includes appropriate meal schedules and serving times, dining atmosphere, food/beverage consumption in the classroom, food and beverage fund-raisers, availability of and access to vending machines, behaviors role-modeled by staff, nutrition education at school, physical activity, and generally the messages about eating and physical activity that students receive at school.

The U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA), in collaboration with many national nutrition and school organizations, identified six components of a healthy school nutrition environment. Each one is important and affects the nutrition and physical activity in a child's school life. A definition of the component, indicators for success, and strategies used by Wisconsin schools are listed below.

The Components — School environments promote healthy eating behaviors and active lifestyles if they are committed to:

1. Nutrition and physical activity
2. High quality school meals
3. Other healthy food options
4. A pleasant eating experience
5. Nutrition education
6. Marketing consistent health messages

COMPONENT 1

Commitment to Nutrition and Physical Activity

Healthy eating and physical activity are essential for students to achieve their full academic and physical potential, mental growth, and lifelong health and well-being. Schools influence students' eating and physical activity patterns. In a school committed to a healthy nutrition environment, every member of the education team makes nutrition and physical activity top priorities every day.

Your school is committed to nutrition and physical activity if:

- Nutrition education and physical activity are included in the school's daily education program from pre-kindergarten through grade 12.
- All key stakeholders—school board members, administrators, school staff (including foodservice staff), parents, and students—are included in the policy-making process and support the healthy school nutrition environment.

Good Examples in Wisconsin Schools

Thirty Wisconsin schools/districts became Team Nutrition Project schools, agreeing to work to improve their school nutrition environments. Each school organized a nutrition team with administrators, school board members, teachers, pupil services staff, food service staff, parents and students. Many included community partners such as University of Wisconsin Cooperative Extension staff, public health nutritionists, and health care professionals. The **Viroqua** team invited an insurance company representative.

The Team Nutrition Committees at **Johnston Elementary School** and **James Madison Middle School**, Appleton, developed building-level nutrition policies which led to school board approval of a district-wide nutrition policy. It can be done!

Bay View Middle School, Howard-Suamico School District, held a health fair during parent-teacher conferences that brought in parents, students, and local community health-related organizations. The "Health Blitz" increased family and community awareness of nutrition efforts at school. The school also drafted a set of school nutrition guidelines to communicate its vision for a healthy school.

Lincoln Avenue Elementary School, Milwaukee, offers free adult nutrition and healthy cooking classes at the school through the UW Extension. Students were surveyed on how often they exercise and were encouraged to write in journals about how they feel both when they exercise and when they don't. The lesson led students to analyze the State Mandate for Physical Education, the number of physical education classes currently provided, and the amount of physical education the students recommend for optimum health.

Fairview Elementary School, Pulaski, provided the Team Nutrition ABC's of Good Health Workshop for parents and staff. While parents learned about healthy foods, their children participated in learning activities with high school students.

The videoconference on competitive foods *"was the final piece of information that sold our committee and our board of education"* on developing a comprehensive district nutrition policy.

— Mikki Duran, health and physical education coordinator, Johnston Elementary School, Appleton, on the videoconference, *Competitive Foods: Are they beating out healthy school meals and snacks?* (see Resources for more information).

The children's activities were created and conducted by the high school students as part of a service-learning project. Fairview also plans to draft a school nutrition policy handbook so policies are more accessible to all key stakeholders.

The **Viroqua Area School District** developed a School Nutrition Advisory Council (SNAC) for 3rd and 4th grade students. This initiative has been very successful with over 70 SNAC members meeting 30 minutes monthly during recess time to participate in nutrition activities, such as making healthy snacks, and to further expand their knowledge of healthy living. The students act as peer motivators and are taught to set good examples for their fellow classmates regarding food and nutrition.



Congress South Elementary, Milwaukee, held a food-tasting event. **Maryland Avenue Elementary**, Milwaukee, included health tips in morning announcements and discovered that eating nutritious foods increased school attendance. The valedictorian at **Kewaunee High School** began her graduation speech by thanking the food service staff for all the good food she had been served during her high school years.

Viroqua used the "Trucking Our Way to Health" initiative to motivate staff to incorporate walking into their daily routines. Students were able to observe staff modeling exemplary behaviors such as walking with co-workers during breaks and using stairs instead of elevators.

Johnston Elementary School, Appleton, found that the Team Nutrition ABCs of Good Health Nutrition workshop offered excellent training to help educate staff on nutrition issues in their school.

COMPONENT 2

Commitment to Quality School Meals

Healthy school meals provide the energy and nutrients children need for sound minds and bodies. Studies confirm what parents and teachers have known for years: children who are not well nourished have difficulty learning. The variety of healthy foods offered in school meal programs allows children to learn to enjoy many different foods and to develop healthy eating patterns.

Your school is committed to high quality school meals if:

- Food service staff is properly qualified and certified.
- Menus meet nutrition standards established by the USDA.
- Breakfast, lunch, and after-school snacks are planned with student input, offered at prices students can afford, and feature a variety of healthy choices that are tasty and attractive and include local, cultural, and ethnic favorites of the students.

Good Examples in Wisconsin Schools

Classrooms at **Fairview Elementary**, Pulaski School District, plan some school lunches served by the school food service staff. School menus credit the class that created the menu for the day. During National School Breakfast Week, Fairview sponsored a contest to see which class had the most students eating school breakfast that week. The winning class earned a milk and cookie break, sponsored by the Wisconsin Dairy Council.

The **Viroqua Area School District** actively involves students in planning menus. Viroqua has also implemented a popular Bag Breakfast program for high school students who aren't hungry or don't have time for breakfast before school. Students grab a bag filled with a variety of foods such as mini bagels, applesauce, mini muffins, and peanut butter and jelly sandwiches to eat during the 9:30 a.m. school-wide study hall. Before this program, many students headed for the vending machines before study hall. Viroqua's food service was also responsive to the needs of staff by creating a 'Slim Line' a la carte option for staff. Student lunches contain about 200 calories more than adults need, and some staff found themselves gaining weight when they regularly ate school lunch.

Bay View Middle School, Howard-Suamico School District, developed a comprehensive survey to get student opinions about the lunch program. The survey identified influences on student food choices, quantified students' activity levels, and assessed students' nutritional knowledge. Copies of the survey can be obtained from Kari Alvey, food service manager.



The **Kewaunee School District** bakes its own wonderful whole wheat bread for school lunch. Food service staff offered samples of the bread to introduce it and create excitement about the new product. Nutrition classes take tours of the kitchen and bakery, plan a menu following nutritional guidelines, and then get their own piece of dough to knead, bake, and eat.

Ethan Allen School, Wales, developed a survey for students as a class project. **Ladysmith-Hawkins School District** has a "Worldly Wednesday" that features menus from around the world and has added a salad bar in the high school. Special events such as the karaoke breakfast and breakfast with the principal promote breakfast at **James Madison Middle School**, Appleton. **Sauk Prairie Elementary** has salad bar days for the staff.



STRATEGIES (continued)

COMPONENT 3

Commitment to Offering Healthy Food Options

The quality of the school nutrition environment depends on the quality of *all* foods and beverages sold or served at school. Foods with little nutrition compete with healthy school meals, send mixed messages to students, and undermine nutrition education efforts to promote healthy eating. School nutrition policies must address all foods and beverages sold or served on school grounds or at school events. This includes a la carte offerings in the school dining room; and foods and beverages sold in vending machines, snack bars, school stores, and concession stands; foods and beverages sold as part of fundraising activities; and refreshments served at parties, celebrations, and meetings. Decisions about the sale of competitive foods should be based on nutrition goals for students, not on profit making.

Your school is committed to other healthy food options if:

- All foods and beverages that are available at school contribute to meeting the dietary needs of students.
- There are appropriate restrictions on students' access to vending machines.
- School staff does not use food as a reward or punishment.
- Your school encourages parents to provide healthy bag lunches for students.
- Your school encourages organizations to raise funds by selling non-food items.

Good Examples in Wisconsin Schools

James Madison Middle School, Appleton, bought a milk vending machine which has proved very profitable for the school. Soda machines have been eliminated from the entire building, even from the teachers' lounge. Students researched food corporations and compared the nutritional information about their products with health standards. Students were then encouraged to write to these companies and present their research findings. The school also instituted "snack drills," ten minute breaks with a healthy snack and a short survey to analyze student eating habits.

Congress South Elementary, Milwaukee, instituted a healthy snack bag program. The school packs bags of healthy snacks to send home with students. Included in the bags is a list of other good snacks to make and information about the school's nutrition project. After the snacks have been eaten, the bags are brought back to school and are refilled.

The **Viroqua School District** offers "Third Thursday" meals for community groups to raise money and for parents to sample the foods served daily in the lunchroom. Food service also provides staff with coupons to encourage them to eat school lunch and offers healthy classroom party foods.

The **Kewaunee School District** offers healthy after-school lunches for athletes or students participating in extra curricular activities. The **Dodgeland School District** offers a mid-morning nutrition break and has a milk vending machine. Teachers at **Cashton Elementary** are positive role models for students at classroom parties. Teachers at **Fairview Elementary** encourage students to bring healthy birthday treats. Soda machines have been removed from the commons area at **Bay View Middle School**, Howard-Suamico School District.

COMPONENT 4

Commitment to a Pleasant-Eating Experience

Children will enjoy their food more and may try more healthy options if they can relax, eat, and socialize without feeling rushed. Studies show that environment has a powerful influence on behavior. A pleasant dining area allows students to pay attention to what they are eating, and to enjoy the sensory and social aspects of a healthy meal.

Your school is committed to creating pleasant eating experiences if:

- Meal periods are long enough for students to eat and socialize, both with other children and with adults.
- Dining areas are attractive.
- Recess for elementary grades is scheduled before lunch so that children will come to lunch less distracted and ready to eat.
- Creative, innovative methods are used to keep noise levels appropriate—no "eat in silence" or whistles.

Good Examples in Wisconsin Schools

The **Dodgeland School District** invites students to eat lunch with the elementary principal one day in their birthday month. The school has also just moved into a new facility that features a lunch room with round tables to encourage conversation. The new lunch room feels more like a dining room than an institutional cafeteria.

Teachers from **Fairview Elementary**, Pulaski Community School District, help serve lunch and encourage students to make

healthy choices. Teachers also eat with students and make an effort to let students see them carrying water instead of soda.

The **Oconto School District** plans to create a “family eating experience” in its elementary school cafeteria by inviting families to eat with students. The school has also instituted behavior cards as an alternative to more negative noise control methods. The school would also like to recruit enough volunteers to have one adult eating lunch with children at each table, providing good role models and preventing behavior problems.

The **Superior School District** held a “Name the Cafeteria” contest to promote a sense of student ownership. The district is planning a new food court and hopes to extend the lunch period. The nutrition team is considering the impact that lunch-after-recess could have on reducing food waste in the cafeteria and may publish the results of their research for the benefit of other schools.

The **Viroqua School District** had a student architecture design class develop a “new look” for the high school cafeteria. Viroqua has recess before lunch, keeps lunch lines short, frequently decorates the cafeteria, and has an excellent custodial staff who keep the cafeteria clean. Students are also encouraged to eat healthy foods.

Cashton Elementary has a lunch room mural that children designed and painted. Cashton also offered a teacher inservice on expectations in the lunch room.



- Nutrition education is offered in the lunchroom and in the classroom, with coordination between school food service staff and teachers.
- Students receive nutrition messages throughout the school that are consistent and reinforce each other.

Good Examples in Wisconsin Schools

Lincoln Avenue Elementary, Milwaukee, held a healthy snack-making session with students and parents. Students created a healthy-snacks menu to give to their parents and a healthy snacks cookbook is in the works. The school partnered with the UW Extension to offer a class on the Food Guide Pyramid.

The **Viroqua School District** worked with the CESA 4 school nurse to help incorporate nutrition education into curriculum at all levels. Viroqua also developed a “train the trainers” workshop in which coaches stress with athletes the importance of nutrition and physical activity. Staff members accepted a walking challenge, kept track of the miles that they walked, and plotted those miles on a map of the U.S.

In the **Kewaunee School District**, one elementary physical education teacher implemented “Work-out Wednesday,” a mileage club that encourages students to walk at home with their families. Students get a pair of “feet” to stick on the wall for every five miles that they walk. The teacher and food service staff

worked together to plan a physical activity for each day of the month in March and put that activity on the lunch menu. This project inspired great excitement in kids as they eagerly anticipated trying the activity of the day. Also, the “Let’s Get Physical” and “Cooking Kids” summer school classes were a hit.

Greendale School District sixth graders learn about nutrition in interesting ways. Students document family eating habits, are involved in listening sessions with the food service director, educate peers with nutrition posters and a nutrition website, and research the eating habits of different cultures.

The **Dodgeland School District** held a staff inservice on nutrition. An art teacher at **Fairview Elementary**, Pulaski, worked on nutrition-based art projects with students. At **Maryland Avenue Elementary**, Milwaukee, students keep food diaries in health class and the staff is educated about nutrition for kids. **Bay View Middle School**, Howard-Suamico School District, held a nutrition workshop for parents and staff. **Cashton Elementary** brings guest speakers (including kitchen staff) into classrooms to direct activities that promote healthy lifestyles.

COMPONENT 5

Commitment to Nutrition Education

Building nutrition knowledge and skills helps children make healthy eating and physical activity choices. To make a difference, nutrition education for children should be appropriate for students’ ages, reflect their cultures, and provide opportunities for them to practice skills and have fun. The nutrition education curriculum should be easy to teach and connect to state learning standards.

Your school is committed to nutrition education if:

- Students in all grades receive high quality, interactive nutrition education that teaches the skills they need to adopt healthy eating behaviors.



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STRATEGIES (continued)

COMPONENT 6

Commitment to Marketing Consistent Health Messages

Making healthy food choices and physical activity available for students is important. But it is also important to educate students, parents, teachers, administrators, and the community about the benefits of a healthy school nutrition environment—and motivate them to take action. Special promotions and events are great marketing tools.

Your school is committed to marketing if:

- Healthy eating and physical activity are actively promoted.
- Student input and feedback are sought and used in planning a healthy school environment.
- Your school doesn't allow advertising that promotes less nutritious food choices.
- Your school works with a variety of media to spread the word about healthy school nutrition.

Good Examples in Wisconsin Schools

The **Superior School District** invited a consultant from the National Food Service Management Institute to visit their schools and help create innovative marketing strategies for healthy food choices. A special event in the cafeteria featured a carved ice sculpture! The district received marketing help from high school students, and food service workers appeared on TV during a local station's fundraising efforts to promote food service and school lunch.

An article written by a high school student in the **Viroqua Area School District** touted why school lunch at her school was cool. The article was published in *Youth Press*, a newsletter that focuses on healthy teen lifestyles and strives to give Wisconsin youth, particularly those in rural areas, a voice in their communities.

Fairview Middle School, Pulaski School District, plans to randomly assign one student each day the role of "phantom food shopper" whose job is to fill out a survey about their lunch that day. Local media have given good coverage to the school's efforts to promote nutrition. Word is spreading among parents about the benefits of attending one of the district's informative workshops: Team Nutrition's ABC's of Good Health.



The **Greendale School District** believes it is important to discuss advertising techniques with students to help them make decisions based on their knowledge, not on what advertisers say.

Bay View Middle School implemented a school-wide survey of students and parents to gather feedback about the lunch program. Nutrition information is also featured in every school newsletter. **Dodgeland School District** had an information table about its Team Nutrition project at school registration and received much student input on meal improvement plans. Team Nutrition members in the **Oconto School District** held a tasting event and spoke with parents. They also had an information booth at a READ Across America event. **Ethan Allen School**, Wales, sponsored a health fair and tasting event. The **Sauk Prairie School District** included Team Nutrition project brochures in registration packets. **Maryland Avenue Elementary**, Milwaukee, had a poster contest. **James Madison Middle School**, Appleton, used local media to get the word out about school nutrition activities. Menu backs in the **Kewaunee School District** were used to inform parents about their Team Nutrition project.

Steps to Improve the School Nutrition Environment

Getting started is the key. The steps you take—small, medium, or giant—will go a long way toward changing the scene at schools and improving the health and education of America’s children. The following steps can help you in the process of improving the nutrition environment in your school:

The Steps

- 1. Create a team and get buy-in**
- 2. Conduct a needs assessment**
- 3. Develop an Action Plan**
- 4. Put plans into action**
- 5. Evaluate**
- 6. Communicate**

Step 1: Create a Team and Get Buy-in

Important change generally comes about when one person sees a need for change and is willing to take action. A good first step is to bring together a group of interested people and discuss the concerns you share. You may be able to start with an existing team such as a school health committee. Potential team members include the school food service director or manager, teachers, school counselors and nurses, school board members, administrators, parents, students, and community members and leaders. Team members should be willing to commit to participate actively and to stay involved.

WHAT WORKS: Advice from Team Nutrition Schools on creating a supportive environment

Create a supportive environment.

- Get the backing of the school board before you begin.
- Involve allies on the team. Look to community partners such as the UW Cooperative Extension staff; Women, Infant and Children Supplemental Program (WIC) nutritionists; and health care professionals for support.

Involve all key players on the team.

- Recruit individuals or groups who may be directly affected by the issues addressed. Get parents and students involved from the start. Have at least one team member from each grade level.
- Many people need to be involved in the project; it must be a team effort and not just the job of one “worker bee.”
- Invite diversity on your planning team.

Be aware that change is upsetting.

- This is an emotional topic, be sensitive to others.
- Communicate the team goals and planned activities to all stakeholders to alleviate anxiety about your efforts and to solicit support for them.

Establish structure for team meetings.

- Meet at a set time each month and determine this meeting time at the first meeting.
- If your team can’t have regular meetings, meet individually to keep things going.

Understand that teams go through stages of development.

- Take the time and effort to listen to each person’s views and suggestions. Make sure each team member has the chance to contribute.

Step 2: Conduct a Needs Assessment

The next step is for the team to identify areas of the school environment that need improvement. Sample assessment tools are available. (See Assessment Tools on page 23). Using these assessment tools will highlight where you are now, what you are doing well and what needs improvement, and will help you determine next steps.

Setting Priorities

- Does the needs assessment substantiate the priorities to be addressed? This will be important if there is resistance to your plan.
- Recruit additional members to address the priorities.

Step 3: Develop an Action Plan

Review the school’s strengths and weaknesses and select areas for improvement. The team may need to decide which areas to tackle first, and which to do later. Decide on specific activities that will help achieve the desired improvements. Determine what materials and resources you will need to complete the activities and what your timeframes will be. Set times for reviewing successes and resolving problems, and make certain your plan includes a method for evaluating progress.



STEPS TO IMPROVE THE SCHOOL NUTRITION ENVIRONMENT (continued)

WHAT WORKS: Advice from Team Nutrition Schools on developing an action plan

Be realistic.

- Start small.
- Choose outcomes that can be reached
- Each team member should be given a project.

Options make change easier.

- Provide options to the group you are trying to convince to change. Choices allow people to feel they have control over their environments.
- Options allow us to educate kids to make good choices.

Consider where to start.

- Choose the objective that gets the most attention and start with that.
- Nutrition education in the classroom is a good starting place as this is an easy area to achieve improvement.

Generate excitement for the plan.

- Do promotional activities for students and staff prior to implementing the plan. This will increase anticipation.
- Highlight what you will be doing for stakeholders (e.g.: adding salad bar, developing a healthy snack list for parents), not what you may be eliminating (e.g.: no more super-sizing cafeteria items, no candy as treats in the classroom).

Step 4: Put Plans into Action

Ideally, every school's plan to create a nutrition-friendly environment will incorporate all of the Six Components (see page 6). In practice, schools should focus on implementing only about two of the Six Components each year. The needs assessment completed by the school will identify priorities and determine which components should first be addressed. Assign responsibilities to specific team members, then get activities underway.

Step 5: Evaluate

Review your progress—recognize your successes and resolve problems that arise. Your team may need to revise the plan as you go along to make sure it accomplishes goals.

Step 6: Communicate

Let other people in the community (including the media) know about your activities. Invite them to participate as often as possible. This will help win support for goals, gain recognition for your school, and encourage others to join the team.

Sustaining change

Once change in the school's nutrition environment has begun, it is important to ensure that those changes endure. Key stakeholders must support the project, and students and staff especially must feel ownership in the process. For ideas on gaining support for your nutrition efforts and creating ownership in the project, see the article in this booklet on *Strategies for Improving the School Nutrition Environment*.

Implementing policy is another good strategy to make lasting changes in your school's nutrition environment. Policies keep order in a changing school environment. Team Nutrition members in the **Superior School District** suggest that schools begin by reviewing policies already in place and determining how often they are—or are not—followed.

Bay View Middle School, Howard-Suamico School District, began its policy efforts by drafting a set of school nutrition guidelines. Once school-level policies are in place, you may want to begin creating a district-wide nutrition policy, as **James Madison Middle School** and **Johnston Elementary School**, Appleton, did. Adoption of a district-wide nutrition policy may be challenging work, but will affect student health for the long term.

While it's important to have long-range goals, you can't get from point A to point Z without first getting to B, C, D, and so on. Short-term objectives need to be realistic and should be considered as steps in the right direction. If you're always looking too far ahead, it's easy to get discouraged and feel you're falling short.

— Kari Alvey, food service manager
Bay View Middle School,
Howard-Suamico School District

Ideas for Involving Families in Improving the School Nutrition Environment

Adults are responsible for helping children develop healthy eating behaviors. Since children have access to many food choices and learn eating behaviors at home, school, and the larger community, adults in all of these environments must work together to be effective. The school needs to involve families and community members in designing, implementing, and evaluating school efforts to improve the nutrition environment.

Parents can contribute in many ways: as models and teachers, advocates and volunteers, and planners and decision-makers. Parents can greatly expand the reach and the impact of school efforts to cultivate healthy eating behaviors in students – and in everyone else!

Researcher Joyce Epstein of Johns Hopkins University has identified six ways that schools should reach out to families and communities. Following is a definition of each type of family-school-community partnerships and ideas for how schools can enlist the support and involvement of family and community members. The most effective family involvement is flexible and based on identifying and strengthening families' needs.

Parenting

Build on parenting strengths and help families improve parenting skills. Facilitate support systems and networks to help families nurture their children and understand their development.

- Celebrate Wisconsin Family Day, the fourth Monday of September, to bring attention to the importance of parent-child communication and encourage families to make family dinner a regular feature of their lives. For more information about Wisconsin activities to support Wisconsin Family Day, go to www.dpi.state.wi.us/dpi/dltcl/bbfcsp/tnfamday.html. For more information about this national initiative, go to www.casacolumbia.org.
- Survey parents on their challenges and successes with making healthy food choices for their children and families.
- Host parent workshops on healthy snacking or nutrition needs at various stages of child development. Ask children to help prepare healthy foods with their parents.

Communicating

Design and implement effective two-way communication strategies to reach families, both individually and collectively. The strategies should ensure that families and school staff communicate back and forth about their children.

- Use National School Lunch Week, usually the third week in October; National School Breakfast Week, the first full week in



March; or National Nutrition Month in March, as occasions to inform parents about nutrition-based issues or school policies or goals. Information is available from the American School Food Service Association website at www.asfsa.org, and from the American Dietetic Association website at www.eatright.org.

- As a school or class project, ask children to keep a food journal and write down the number or types of foods they or their families eat for a day or longer. Do the numbers meet the recommended guidelines in the Food Guide Pyramid?
- Publish nutrition-related school policies and goals in the student handbook. Summarize the main points of school nutrition-related workshops in the school or district newsletter to inform parents who could not attend.

Learning at Home

Provide for families and school staff to work together in developing learning goals and offering opportunities for learning activities at home and in the community that meet the goals.

- Ask students to set personal goals for healthy eating and physical activity. What goals can families set to encourage healthy student choices?
- Invite teachers to design parent-child interactive homework activities that incorporate information related to nutrition or physical activity into math, social sciences, language arts, or science assignments.
- Encourage staff to provide families with ideas for reinforcing nutrition education at home, including useful websites with healthy family meal recipes. Ask families for their ideas!



STEPS TO IMPROVE THE SCHOOL NUTRITION ENVIRONMENT (continued)

Volunteering

Recruit and organize volunteer participation from families and the community-at-large.

- Recognize volunteers by inviting them to a healthy school lunch or breakfast or offer complimentary school lunch tickets to volunteers redeemable at their convenience.
- Invite nutritionists or other community members with nutrition-related careers to speak to students about healthy food choices. Invite parents to attend and publish a summary of main points in the school newsletter.
- Ask parents to prepare healthy classroom snacks for birthdays, holidays, or other special celebrations in school. Provide them with a list of ideas.



Decision Making

Design a governance structure that permits parents to be partners in policy decisions. Recruit families to act as advocates and represent other families.

- Ask family members and students to join your school's Team Nutrition or other committee to improve the school nutrition environment. Aim for two or three parent members of each committee.
- Enlist the support and involvement of the PTA or PTO in devising guidelines for non-food fundraisers and rewards for students, and healthy food options for party treats and vending machines.
- Create a task force of parents, community members, students, and staff to create a more pleasant eating environment.

Community Collaboration

Establish partnerships with individuals and organizations in the community.

- Sponsor a Family Health Fair. Invite community agencies and organizations to display and disseminate information promoting good nutrition and physical activities for families.
- Create a Healthy Community Cookbook. Ask school families, staff, and community members to contribute healthy recipes.
- Enlist the support of community members in a student-led service learning project to improve nutrition in and out of school.

For more information on family-school-community partnerships, visit the DPI website at www.dpi.state.wi.us/dpi/dlcl/bbfcsp/index.html.



Lessons Learned In Creating a Healthy School Nutrition Environment

Improving the health of the school environment often involves making many changes. The 30 Wisconsin schools/district that participated in the 2002-03 Wisconsin Team Nutrition project pledged to work towards improving the school nutrition environment. This article presents a summary of the outcomes of their projects, some of the challenges, and some steps they took to begin overcoming those challenges.

Conclusions About What Worked

Project Created Better Awareness of Good Nutrition

The major result that the Team Nutrition Project schools cited was helping staff, students, and families to become more aware of the benefits of healthy food choices and active lifestyles. Schools laid the groundwork by developing health-focused school policies, as required by the project, and found that students and staff simply became more conscious of what they were eating and how much they were exercising. The increased awareness carried over to families as they received written information from school and perhaps “received instruction” from their children at home.

Children Made Healthier Food Choices

As a result of written information and conversations among staff, students, and families about good nutrition, Team Nutrition Project schools noted students and staff making healthier food choices. Schools saw more students and staff eating healthier bag lunches and snacks and saw an increase in the number of students eating breakfast. For example, **Maryland Avenue School**, Milwaukee Public Schools, instituted a “no candy or gum” policy; a teacher in the **Greendale School District** started a student focus group to talk about the healthier food choices students made; and school parties in the **Appleton School District** now offer healthy foods.

The School Environment Became More Positive

Many schools reported that promoting consistent and healthful messages for students, staff, and parents had a significant, positive impact on the school environment. Spreading the message of good nutrition beyond school lunch and in the context of the whole school environment helped unify everyone in a common, community effort. For example, parents in the **Greendale School District** said the program positively affected their personal eating and exercise habits. Some Greendale teachers have also replaced candy as a student reward with the honor of sitting at the teacher’s desk.



Some schools also said that the common perception among students of America as a culture of fast food and poor nutrition could be countered one person at a time but only with encouragement and support from the whole community.

Support of Staff is Critical to Success

Staff in some schools were initially resistant to efforts to create healthier school nutrition environments, regarding it as the source of more work or as a restriction of personal lifestyle. Schools that involved staff in designing and implementing nutrition goals or who were responsive and concerned about the well-being of staff encountered less resistance. Schools with effective nutrition efforts said they focused on increasing staff knowledge about good nutrition and exercise, as well as increasing the number of food choices available to staff members. In a number of districts, for example, staff members responded enthusiastically to the physical activity message when they were each given a pedometer to wear. In the **Viroqua School District**, food service created a “Slim Line” school lunch option for staff members to meet adult nutrition guidelines.

Challenges to Improving the School Nutrition Environment

Lack of Money

James Madison Middle School, Appleton, wanted to buy a milk vending machine to offer students healthy beverages. With little money to buy a machine, which runs around \$6,000 to \$8,000, they turned to fundraising efforts. The school asked local dairy



LESSONS LEARNED (continued)

associations and the PTA for support—and got it. The new milk vending machine was installed and immediately began making a big difference—in its first three weeks, the machine sold an average 200 bottles per day!

Lack of Interest or Support

The Team Nutrition team in the **Oconto School District** strove to implement a school breakfast program. Team Nutrition members addressed the board to promote this issue and documented the benefits of school breakfast. While the Team is still trying to change board members' minds, along the way they discovered community support for a breakfast program. A couple new to the community, for example, donated 500 pounds of dry cereal, milk, bowls, and spoons so hungry students could eat breakfast. The team will continue to promote the breakfast program and is confident that the school board will listen if enough parents show concern.

In the **Kewaunee School District**, the job of organizing the healthy school initiatives, as often happens, fell to one person. Sheree Malvitz, food services manager, persisted, however, and approached the local Optimists Club about donating money for bikes. The club agreed and the local Pamida store gave the school a good discount on the bikes. The bikes were used as prizes during a lunch time drawing for both students and staff. This created so much excitement around the project that soon kids were more interested in eating lunch and staff and community members wanted to actively get involved in the Team Nutrition project. Two new nutrition courses were added to the summer school program as a result.

In the **Greendale School District**, budget cuts reduced physical education time for 7th and 8th graders. The school worked to offset this loss of physical activity time by regularly incorporating alternative physical activities such as open gym as a reward and during activity periods.

Changing Behaviors

Bay View Middle School, Howard-Suamico School District, encountered little resistance when it removed soda, Little Debbie cakes, and daily fries from the school.

Dodgeland School District has long offered food as a reward to students, a common practice in many schools. Recognizing that change takes time, the school chose to go slowly. Dodgeland still offers food as a reward, but after working with the food service manager, reward coupons for pizza or sub sandwiches have replaced candy. The school hopes to take the next step of non-food rewards soon.



Lincoln Avenue Elementary, Milwaukee, devised a comprehensive plan to address the problem of parents sending "junk" food to school with their children. The school offered free nutrition classes for parents, taught by UW Extension staff and focusing on healthy eating, stretching food dollars, and food safety. It also held healthy snack-making classes for parents and students with menus that students prepared for

their parents. And during parent night, the school held a healthy snack in-service for parents.

Food service workers at the **Superior School District** found a simple way to get kids to eat more fruit. They discovered that kids in grades K-6 would eat twice as much fruit if they garnished the fruit with a cherry.

The **Greendale School District** has a community partnership with a nearby health care center, which liked to "treat" visiting students to non-nutritious foods. The school addressed this problem by spreading its "eat healthy" message in several ways. Students made placemats with slogans, invited a dietitian to speak, and brought in their own healthy snacks to share. Greendale was also challenged by the unhealthy eating habits at home that some students showed at school. To address this problem, students were asked to write down family eating habits for a week and then to modify the size of the food groups in the Food Guide Pyramid to reflect how their family eats. The activity increased the nutrition awareness of both children and parents.



Nutrition is Basic to Building Good Citizenship

By: Julie Allington, Nutrition Education Consultant, in collaboration with DPI Student Services, Prevention & Wellness Team.

Helping children develop their full potential as citizens is an important priority of families, communities, and schools. Developing citizenship means becoming a productive, responsible, caring, and contributing member of society. Eating behaviors affect this development and enhance the following characteristics of good citizenship:

- Being successful in school.
- Making responsible decisions.
- Caring about others.
- Contributing to society.
- Developing social and personal skills, such as problem-solving, accepting a variety of perspectives, and setting and attaining goals.
- Developing a core set of common values.

Schools are places where these qualities, ideally first taught in the home, can and should be promoted with the family and community.

From the first day a child enters school to the day the young adult receives a diploma, our society maintains a common belief that we want our children to be productive, responsible, caring and contributing individuals.

Does this common ground extend to helping our children develop healthy eating behaviors? Yes. We may choose to ignore it for a variety of reasons—not seeing the connection between eating and success in life, financial implications, or lack of skills or resources—but establishing a healthy school nutrition environment is as essential to developing citizenship as civic education.

The call to good citizenship requires a clear understanding of the kind of people we would like them to become. We want young people to possess the knowledge, skills, and motivation for healthy eating behaviors and lifestyles.

Maslow's Hierarchy

Thus, the mission of youth development includes engaging young people in meeting basic personal and social needs to feel safe, cared for, valued, useful, and spiritually grounded. Without these basic needs met, most young people will be unable to achieve the goal of becoming caring, contributing, productive, and responsible citizens.

Maslow identified this as the “hierarchy of motivation.” Self actualization, as he called it, is the highest drive, but before a person can turn to it he or she must satisfy other, lower motiva-

tions such as hunger, safety, and belonging. The hierarchy has five levels. Schools can take action at each level to promote student health for their academic success. Here is how:

1. **Physiological: hunger, thirst, shelter, etc.**
 - Offer a nutritious breakfast program. Many children come to school without the fuel they need for academic achievement.
 - Offer and promote healthy food options throughout the school building including the cafeteria, vending, school store, and concessions; develop rules for class parties; etc.; all of which complement nutrition lessons in the classroom.
2. **Safety: security, protection from physical and emotional harm**
 - Provide nutrition education through grades K-12 to give students the knowledge, skills, and motivation to develop eating behaviors and lifestyles that promote health.
 - Nurture trust among students and adults by promoting consistent healthful messages in the classroom and wherever food is available in school.
3. **Social: affection, belonging, acceptance, friendship**
 - Establish a zero tolerance policy addressing size discrimination and harassment.
 - Encourage modeling of healthy eating and physical activity by school staff, parents, and community members.
4. **Esteem, also called ego: internal needs are self respect, autonomy, achievement. External needs are status, recognition, attention.**
 - Provide positive feedback to students for healthy food choices.
 - Have students assist in school menu development.
5. **Self actualization: doing things**
 - Help students develop their interests and abilities, which they are physically and emotionally able to accomplish because of healthy eating and lifestyle behaviors. Provide opportunities for nutrition advocacy by allowing students to lead strategies such as healthy vending machine options.

Positive experiences enable youth to build assets and competencies that allow them to function and contribute in daily life. There must be clear and consistent expectations that youth will set goals, devise strategies to meet goals, and follow social rules. Positive youth development occurs when adults deliberately create conditions and opportunities for youth to become caring, contributing, productive, and responsible citizens.



NUTRITION IS BASIC TO BUILDING GOOD CITIZENSHIP (continued)

Good citizens can be counted on to consistently demonstrate honesty, respect, courage, and other core citizenship values in everyday life. Schools have an opportunity to model these values especially during times of financial hardship. Will they guard the health of students at all costs or fall to the pressures of fast food and beverage companies who offer schools financial gain at the expense of students' health? Does the entire school program reflect a clear commitment to the nutritional health of students by helping them acquire healthy skills, attitudes, values, and knowledge?

Schools need to enhance the total development of children: academic, social, physical, and emotional. Truly effective schools embrace a mission that defines student success in terms beyond intellectual achievement. Seven characteristics of effective schools that help children become caring, contributing, productive, and responsible citizens have been identified. Nutrition is basic to that development and is reflected in each of the seven characteristics:

1. **Core Values:** School and community members identify citizenship qualities such as honesty, respect, and responsibility that all agree to foster in children. These qualities are modeled by staff and students alike and set the standards for acceptable and healthy behaviors.

Positive values can inspire students to do what is right, serve their community, work hard, and learn as much as they can. A core set of values modeled by staff, students, and community helps to create a disciplined and safe environment for learning, and a health-promoting environment.

2. **Safe and Orderly Places:** Students and staff feel respected, and the climate and culture of the school is drug free and safe from any form of violence. Children and adults learn constructive ways to settle differences, and peaceful conflict resolution is the norm.

Brain development shows that students who are threatened, harassed, or do not feel safe and valued in school cannot learn or

retain learning well enough to succeed academically. Overweight children are often the victims of harassment and ridicule by peers and may experience discrimination by teachers. Surveys of students consistently point out that students want clear expectations, fair discipline, and reasonable boundaries in their schools and classrooms.

3. **Family and Community Involvement:** The contributions of all who make up the school community are honored and celebrated. Parents, caregivers, and community members have a variety of opportunities to make meaningful contributions to school programming and student citizenship development.

Study after study shows the importance of involving parents in their child's education. Part of that educational process is a partnership between parents, school, and the community working to ensure that schools are healthy and safe places. Schools must address issues such as the food and beverage choices available in school, in partnership with parents and communities, especially in light of budget deficit. Families, with the support of schools, help children meet life's challenges and become healthy and productive citizens.



- 4. Address Societal Issues:** Prevention of risk behaviors are a valued part of the school's programs. Such behaviors include dysfunctional eating, which can include overeating, under-eating; eating for emotional reasons; and spending an inordinate amount of time on food, weight and body image; and sedentary lifestyles. Services are available to students and staff who may be facing such issues in their own lives.

The school is the one institution other than the family that has consistent contact with all children. However, some children are challenged by life issues such as dysfunctional eating. Schools, in partnership with families and communities, must help children develop the knowledge, attitude, and skills they need to make responsible decisions about these behaviors. Children who are dealing with such challenges may simply be too preoccupied or distracted to do their best in school.



- 5. Positive Relationships:** Students feel personally known and cared for by at least one adult in the school. Students and community members are viewed as resources for supporting one another.

A collegial relationship among staff and a positive relationship between staff and students contribute to a nurturing, safe, and productive environment. These relationships are critical to helping children overcome difficulty, recognize their talents, and feel individually and collectively valued. School staff understand that they play a critical role in helping students develop healthy eating behaviors and lifestyles in order to be successful, by modeling a healthy lifestyle that includes wise food choices.

- 6. Engage Students' Minds:** Schools use many strategies and approaches to make learning relevant for students. Classrooms are interactive places that often take learning beyond the schoolhouse door.

Engaging students' minds keeps them connected to school and makes them responsible for their own learning. Students who are connected to school have the greatest opportunities for becoming caring, contributing, produc-

tive, and responsible citizens. When students feel they can make a positive difference, they will work hard to achieve that change.

- 7. High Expectations:** Students are expected to make healthy food and lifestyle choices and experience success. All students and staff are expected to model positive behaviors that embody good citizenship and health.

For students to make the healthiest eating and physical activity choices for their nutrition health, the adults who surround them at home and at school must encourage and expect achievement. Clear expectations for behavior and performance provide students with a picture of the kind of person they and their families want them to be. Having that vision reinforced over and over by teachers and caregivers becomes a self-fulfilling prophecy that helps children overcome difficulties and challenges. Likewise, adults in the school setting should be expected to do their best and model appropriate eating and physical activity behaviors. High expectations for youth and adults help everyone in the school strive to create an ideal that promotes the best in each person.

Results to Expect

What results can you expect from a healthy school nutrition environment? The table on pages 20 and 21 shows the expected results for students, staff, and families and communities for each of the characteristics of effective schools.



Expected Results of a Healthy School Nutrition Environment

1. Core Values		
Students Will: Feel ownership for core values See healthy eating and lifestyles modeled within and outside the school Have clear expectations for food and lifestyle choices	Staff Will: Feel ownership for core values Share the responsibility for promoting and modeling healthy eating and lifestyles Feel supported by the community in teaching healthy eating and lifestyles	Families and Community Will: Feel ownership for core values Understand the school and community's role in promoting healthy eating and lifestyles See the positive nutritional health values established in the home supported in the school
2. Safe and Orderly Places		
Students Will: Feel safe at school Contribute to a positive school environment and avoid harassment based on size Understand their actions, including food choices, are viewed as an opportunity for learning Have a forum for addressing concerns about safety	Staff Will: Feel safe at school Support one another Contribute to a positive school climate by ensuring that no size discrimination exists Feel supported by families and community for enforcing reasonable boundaries fairly	Families and Community Will: Express support and confidence in the school as a safe and orderly place Feel safe and respected on school grounds and at school events Understand expectations and promote healthy eating behavior for children Model and expect children to exhibit safe behaviors, avoiding harassment of others based on size
3. Family and Community Involvement		
Students Will: Make meaningful connections with more adults Demonstrate healthy eating and lifestyles outside of school Feel their role in making healthy eating choices is valued and supported by the home, school and community Welcome and encourage their family's participation in a school nutrition advisory council, school meals, etc.	Staff Will: Feel supported by the community Work with families in helping students to develop healthy eating habits Communicate nutrition principles effectively to families Provide more options for community learning on healthy eating and lifestyles	Families and Community Will: Understand school nutrition education goals and curriculum Have opportunities for involvement and communication with the school about nutrition and healthy eating Understand the role of the school as a partner in helping youth develop healthy eating habits and lifestyles Practice making healthy food choices at home
4. Positive Relationships		
Students Will: Feel basic nutritional and emotional needs are met Believe that caring adults are looking out for their best interests including health Feel that adults will mentor them relative to healthy eating choices and lifestyles	Staff Will: Look at the school cafeteria as the learning laboratory for classroom lessons on nutrition Take the opportunity to observe students' food choices. Mentor students about healthy food choices	Families and Community Will: Recognize and support a child's positive feelings about school meals Speak well of the school nutrition environment, cafeteria, nutrition teachers, etc. Volunteer to serve on a parent nutrition advisory council Honor the cultural food traditions and contributions of all groups

5. Address Societal Values		
<p>Students Will: Feel supported in making health-promoting nutrition decisions</p> <p>Access a variety of nutrition and health programs and services that support them in making nutritionally healthy decisions</p> <p>Become informed about community nutrition resources</p>	<p>Staff Will: Understand youth risk behaviors related to nutrition, diet, body image, size discrimination and harassment, related suicide risks, etc.</p> <p>Support student inquiry and participation in service-learning activities to improve the nutrition environment of the school and community</p> <p>Access programs and services that encourage healthy decisions about nutrition and lifestyle, for their own health</p> <p>Become informed about community nutrition resources</p>	<p>Families and Community Will: Be an active partner in risk prevention and health promotion relative to nutrition, diet, body image, size discrimination and harassment, related suicide risks, etc.</p> <p>Support the school's efforts in helping children make healthy nutrition decisions and avoid related risky behaviors</p> <p>Become informed about community nutrition resources</p>
6. Engage Students' Minds		
<p>Students Will: Value good nutrition decisions because they connect to life-long health, feelings of wellness, etc.</p> <p>Show greater acceptance and appreciation of diversity of size and shape</p> <p>Demonstrate and persevere in making healthy nutrition decisions in the classroom, school environment including cafeteria and vending areas, at home and in the community</p> <p>Enjoy and participate in the school nutrition environment</p>	<p>Staff Will: Provide classroom lessons on nutrition for all K-12 students</p> <p>Develop a variety of teaching strategies for nutrition education to meet the diverse needs of students</p> <p>View themselves as facilitators of learning for nutrition lessons</p> <p>Share the responsibility for learning healthy eating behaviors with students and families</p> <p>Experience a higher degree of student involvement and satisfaction relative to nutrition education</p>	<p>Families and Community Will: Have greater opportunities to be involved in students learning healthy eating behaviors</p> <p>Understand the school's nutrition education goals and curriculum</p> <p>Feel excited about the innovations they see in the school nutrition environment</p> <p>Help develop and participate in community-based opportunities for youth to learn healthy eating</p>
7. High Expectations		
<p>Students Will: Feel respected and safe in the school nutrition environment</p> <p>Strive for personal healthy eating behaviors and achievement</p> <p>See healthy eating expectations modeled and supported by peers and adults</p>	<p>Staff Will: Feel respected and safe in the school nutrition environment</p> <p>Share responsibility with students for fostering high expectations for healthy eating behaviors</p> <p>Welcome support from family and community in maintaining high expectations for healthy eating behaviors for everyone</p>	<p>Families and Community Will: Feel respected and safe in the school nutrition environment</p> <p>Support school staff expectations for healthy eating behaviors for youth and themselves</p> <p>Experience a sense of ownership in creating and understanding high expectations for healthy eating for all community members</p>



Learning Together

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Improve the School Nutrition Environment through Service-Learning

Service-learning is a teaching and learning method which fosters civic responsibility and links classroom learning and applied learning in communities. Schools seeking healthier environments may want to create a service-learning project focused on improving the school nutrition environment.

Students in the **Greendale School District** created a service learning project to promote a healthy school environment and good nutrition. Fifth and sixth grade students of teachers Irina Guillen-Richman and Terri Mutranowski planned and participated in a wide variety of nutrition-based activities such as demonstrating healthy cooking for residents of a local health care center, debating seventh graders on the health benefits of the cafeteria choices, surveying other students about the school lunch program, and donating food baskets with items from the Food Guide Pyramid to less fortunate individuals. By reflecting on and articulating what they learned from the service-learning project, for example, through poems and articles, the students benefited both academically and emotionally.

In Wisconsin service-learning must include the following components:

Wisconsin Service-Learning 4-Point Test

1. **Youth/Learner Engagement.** Do students identify community needs and the issue to be addressed? Is the service project student-planned and student-led?
2. **Meaningful Service.** Does the service meet a real community need? How is the need identified? Who benefits from the service project? Will the community be a better place because of the project? Are local agencies, organizations, or community groups partners in the project?
3. **Link to Learning and/or Curriculum.** Is the service activity connected to classroom learning? How are learning outcomes determined and measured?
4. **Reflection and Evaluation.** Is there an opportunity for students to talk or write about the project before, during, and after it happens? Are students involved in evaluating the project's success? How will the knowledge gained from this project be used in future planning?

Faces of Service-Learning

In schools, service-learning is part of the academic curriculum. In community organizations, youth develop practical skills, self-esteem, and a sense of civic responsibility. Examples of service-learning projects include: preserving native plants, designing

neighborhood playgrounds, teaching younger children to read, testing the local water quality, creating wheelchair ramps, preparing food for the homeless, developing urban community gardens, starting school recycling programs, and much more.



Importance of Service-Learning

A national study of Learn and Serve America programs suggests that effective service-learning programs can improve academic grades, increase attendance in school, and develop personal and social responsibility. Whether the goal is academic improvement, personal development, or both, students learn critical thinking, communication, teamwork, civic responsibility, mathematical reasoning, problem solving, public speaking, vocational skills, computer skills, scientific method, research skills, and analysis.

Infusing Service-Learning into School Goals or Instruction

Service-learning is not an "add-on" to the existing curriculum. However, it can be infused into virtually any school goal or subject area. It is a valuable way to convey information to students while allowing them the experience of planning, cooperating, working, and reflecting. Infusing service-learning into school goals or the curriculum is a process similar to planning any other instruction:

Step 1: Consider the relevance of your course or school goal to the school's mission to nurture citizenship.

Step 2: Identify how the course or school goal will link your service-learning project to the citizenship mission of the school.

Step 3: Identify two or three projects that would provide appropriate learning for students and plan student leadership opportunities. Choose projects that

- Provide needed service to the community
- Relate to your focus or your instructional unit
- You find exciting
- Students can help design and operate within the parameters that you set.

Step 4: With students, work through preparation, action, and reflection steps of the project.

For more information, visit the DPI website at www.dpi.state.wi.us/dpi/dltcl/bbfcsp/slhomepage.html.

Resources

Policies and Practices that Support Healthier Lifestyles

The Surgeon General's Call to Action to Prevent and Decrease Overweight and Obesity. December 2001. U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Public Health Service, Office of the Surgeon General;
www.surgeongeneral.gov/topics/obesity/calltoaction/CalltoAction.pdf.

Foods Sold in Competition with School Meal Programs: A Report to Congress. August 2001. U.S. Department of Agriculture, Food and Nutrition Service;
www.fns.usda.gov/cnd/Lunch/CompetitiveFoods/competitive.foods.report.to.congress.htm.

Changing the Scene: Improving the School Nutrition Environment. August 2000. U.S. Department of Agriculture, Food and Nutrition Service;
<http://www.fns.usda.gov/tn/Resources/Changing.html>.

Guidelines for School Health Programs to Promote Lifelong Healthy Eating. MMWR 1996; 45 (No. RR-9): 1-41; Centers for Disease Control and Prevention.
[ftp://ftp.cdc.gov/pub/Publications/mmwr/rr/rr4509.pdf](http://ftp.cdc.gov/pub/Publications/mmwr/rr/rr4509.pdf).

Guidelines for School and Community Programs to Promote Lifelong Physical Activity Among Young People. MMWR 1997; 46 (No. RR-6): 1-36; Centers for Disease Control and Prevention.
[ftp://ftp.cdc.gov/pub/Publications/mmwr/rr/rr4606.pdf](http://ftp.cdc.gov/pub/Publications/mmwr/rr/rr4606.pdf).

Healthy School Nutrition Environments: Promoting Healthy Eating Behaviors. August 2001; U.S. Department of Agriculture, Food and Nutrition Service, Alexandria, Virginia: Published by American Academy of Family Physicians, American Academy of Pediatrics, American Dietetic Association, National Hispanic Medical Association, National Medical Association and the U.S. Department of Agriculture.
www.fns.usda.gov/cnd/HealthyEating/HealthyEatingBehavior/healthyeatingchallenge.htm.

Assessment Tools for Healthy Eating and Physical Activity

Wisconsin Team Nutrition Project Forms. Forms available: Assessment, Barriers and Solutions, Defining Strategies, and Action Planning. 2001. Wisconsin Department of Public Instruction. Download:
www.dpi.state.wi.us/dpi/dltcl/bbfcsp/tn.html.

Keys to Excellence, Standards of Practice for Nutrition Integrity. 2003. American School Food Service Association. Order from the Market Place at
<http://www.asfsa.org> or download: www.asfsa.org/childnutrition/keys/downloads/.

School Health Index for Physical Activity and Healthy Eating: A Self-Assessment and Planning Guide (A) Elementary School and (B) Middle School/High School. 2000. U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Centers for Disease Control and Prevention.

- Download from CDC web sites:
www.cdc.gov/nccdphp/dash or www/cdc.gov/nccdphp/dnpa
- Request by e-mail: ccdinfo@cdc.gov
- Call the Division of Adolescent and School Health Resource Room: 770-488-3168
- Request by toll-free fax: 888-282-7681

Be sure to **specify** either the **elementary school version** or the **middle school/high school version**.

Nutrition Power Professional Improvement Plan for School Food and Nutrition Services. 1999. Wisconsin Nutrition Power Task Force. Free. Order by calling the Department of Public Instruction at 608-267-9228.

Wisconsin's Framework for Comprehensive School Health Programs: Assessment Instrument for Content, 1996. Order from DPI by calling 608-266-8960.

Partnering for Health

Tools for Comprehensive School Health Programs:

Starting a School-Community Health and Safety Council

Running an Effective Meeting

Guest Presenters—Connecting Community Agencies with Schools to Support Instruction in Health and Safety.

June 2000. Wisconsin Departments of Public Instruction and Health and Family Services. Free. Order by calling the Department of Public Instruction at 608-266-2158.

A Manual for Building Local Leadership for Community Nutritional Health. 1996. University of Wisconsin- Extension, Family Living Programs in collaboration with staff from Departments of Public Instruction and Health and Family Services. Free. Order by calling DPI at 608-267-9120.



RESOURCES (continued)

Changing the Scene—Improving the School Nutrition Environment. 2000. USDA. Get a free copy (while supplies last) from: www.fns.usda.gov/tn.

Action for Healthy Kids Initiative. National website: www.actionforhealthykids.org. Click on “Wisconsin” to find out what’s happening in this state.

Developing School Nutrition Policies

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PUBLICATIONS

Changing the Scene—Improving the School Nutrition Environment Kit. 2000. USDA. Get a free copy (while supplies last) from: www.fns.usda.gov/tn.

WASB Focus Publication on policies promoting healthy eating and physical activity. October 2003. Wisconsin Association of School Boards at 877-705-4422 or email info@wasb.org.

Fit, Healthy and Ready to Learn – A School Health Policy Guide: Physical Activity, Healthy Eating and Tobacco-Use Prevention. 2000. National Association of State Boards of Education, Alexandria, VA. Copies can be ordered for \$22 each plus \$4 shipping and handling. Volume discounts are available. Orders under \$50 must be prepaid. VISA and MasterCard accepted. To order call NASBE at 800-220-5183 or write to 277 South Washington Street, Suite 100, Alexandria, VA 22314.



TRAININGS

Competitive Foods: Are they beating out healthy school meals and snacks? Two-part regional videoconference on developing effective school board-approved nutrition policies. 2001. Sponsored by Wisconsin DPI Team Nutrition Project and the Wisconsin Association of School Boards. This videoconference is offered throughout the state each spring. Check the Wisconsin Team Nutrition website for the scheduled date: www.dpi.state.wi.us/dpi/dltcl/bbfcsp/tn.html.

Developing Citizenship

Citizenship—Building a World of Good. 1998. Wisconsin Department of Public Instruction. This tool kit explains the seven characteristics of effective schools, provides an inventory to assess perceived strengths in each of these characteristics, and gives practical ideas to help schools implement the characteristics in their buildings. Download: www.dpi.state.wi.us/dpi/dlsea/sspw/tadocs.html.

